The Theosophical FORUM

AUGUST, 1904

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LIFE AND TEACHINGS
OF
ABBAS EFFENDI

A Study of the Religion of the Babis or Beha'is Founded by the Persian Bab and by his Successors, Beha Ullah and Abbas Effendi

BY

MYRON H. PHELPS

of the New York Bar

With an Introduction by

EDWARD GRANVILLE BROWNE

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* * *

I watched the mighty mass of souls sweep onward without ceasing. A roaring filled my ears as of endless torrents, rent by sharp shrieks and curses. A sulphurous smoke arose. An awful stench. Across the darkness, black and terrible, shot now and then a lurid gleam that made the moving horror plainly visible. My brain reeled. Sick and faint, I cried: "Lo Master, what is this thou showest me!"

He of the radiant face and anguished eyes replied: "This is the strain of human life; study it well."

I caught the faces swiftly passing. Pain and sorrow on each one I read, an awful tragedy. But heart breaking as these suffering ones appeared, I found a deeper sorrow in the ones that spoke of joy.

"This is the maelstrom of man's life," the Master said, "in which he lives, from which he fears to die. Here lies our task: to show a way out of this hell; to make men wish to walk in it when shown."

"Appalling is the task," I cried aghast.

"Yea, verily," the clear voice answered me, "but verily it must be done."

I looked above to the deep vault of heaven, gemmed with its myriad stars. A cool air blew as from some snow-clad mountain summit, laden with fragrance and with peace. But knowing what must be and nerved by the Master's smile of tenderest compassion, I plunged into the maelstrom far below.

CAVÉ.

THE ANTIQUITY OF INDIA.

In previous articles on Primeval Man, we have tried to outline and develop a view of the unfolding of history, in the light of our present knowledge of man's enormous antiquity. The great law of Continuity—which all recent scientific knowledge and philosophic thought have united to establish and enthrone above every minor by-way of cosmic working—emphatically demanded our adherence to the belief that the development of humanity, throughout enormous ages, comparable in vastness and import to the geologic periods, must have been broadly uniform, and that the total wealth of humanity to-day, in power, knowledge, moral and spiritual force, must have been broadly the same, five thousand, ten thousand, or even a hundred thousand years ago. We have tried also to show that within the lines of this broad uniform development through enormous ages, a subsidiary law is at work by no means warring with the law of Continuity, but rather embodying it, and giving it effect. In accordance with this cyclic law, the development of humanity proceeded not in a straight line but by a vast series of wave-like advances, which thus harmonize the working of the forces of humanity with the other great cosmic forces of light, or sound or gravity, and so bear testimony to a uniform process of wave-advance throughout the whole cosmos. While we recognized in the later waves of the rythmic development of races such high crests as our own civilization, and the civilization of medieval Europe—Venice, Florence and Byzantium; of Greece and Rome, of the Aztecs, Toltecs and Peruvians—we saw the earlier wave-crests rising, in ancient China, in Assyria and Egypt and India, and the older American civilizations, and we were gradually led to believe that still earlier waves may be represented in now fallen races like the Negro, the Carib and the flat-headed aborigines of Australia. Two conclusions may be drawn from this: that in this graded unfolding of humanity all parts were essential to the great design of perfection; that in each wave-crest was the opening flower of some new faculty, some hitherto untried power, which for the first time came into being. And as all faculties are necessary to perfection, we cannot say that the fruitage of any one wave-crest in the long procession of humanity is essentially superior to any other, though all

are different, as each is partial and has only turned to the light one facet of the gem which will be perfected humanity.

It must be admitted that if this view of man's slow unfolding be just and true, our own material civilization, with its mastery over Nature's external powers, is in no way more important to the total wealth of human life than the civilization of Greece, with its matchless sense of beauty, or the civilization of old Egypt, with its grand enunciation of the stately dignity and seriousness of life, or the civilization of antique India, with its single-hearted devotion to the inward powers of the soul, and its unequalled appreciation of the unswerving rectitude of moral law. If there be any purpose at all in the unfolding of human history; if there be any meaning in this grand advance of rhythmic waves, each one bearing on its crest some new promise of perfection, we must admit that we are as closely concerned in the meaning of Egypt and Greece and ancient India as in the meaning of the material civilization of to-day. Thereby is restored to the study of man something of the dignity and profound importance which a flippant materialism would rob it of—for the knowledge of ancient India is really the concern, not only of the pedant and the philologist, and the seekers after curious information, but of everyone who prizes the rounded development of humanity, and holds dear the total perfection of man. The recognition that ancient India's unique devotion to the inward powers of the soul, and unparalleled appreciation of the unswerving rectitude of the moral law, really marked a high tide in human life will give to the study of old India a new and serious meaning, and tinge it with something of that almost religious enthusiasm without which no real work is possible, and no noble endeavour can have life. Signs are not wanting to show that this truer valuation of ancient India's meaning, with its unique devotion to the inward powers of the soul, embodied in the Upanishads and the Vedanta, and its profound appreciation of the unswerving rectitude of moral law, most adequately expressed in the religion of Buddha, is beginning to pierce through and shine beyond the circle of professional scholars and to find some echo in the minds of all who think most deeply and most wisely. We may dimly foresee, even now, that in its ultimate result, this wider and deeper *renaissance* of Indian studies may not fall short of the achievement of the Hellenic

Revival of Learning in the Middle Ages, with its love of the outward beauty of nature, but may rather excel it, in bringing a new value and meaning to life. On a future occasion we may follow up and examine each of the two branches of India's message, the devotion to the inward powers of the soul in the Upanishads and Vedanta, and the profound appreciation of the unswerving rectitude of moral law. Meanwhile, the new earnest spirit which is infusing itself into Oriental studies, and especially into the study of the twofold method and secret of India may be illustrated.

The first illustration is from a work of Professor Max Muller —his last word, as he says himself, on the deepest problems which can concern the intellect of man—with the title "Theosophy, or Psychological Religion," the very heart of which is the devotion to the inward powers of the soul embodied in the Upanishads and Vedanta. Professor Max Muller writes:—

"What we can study nowhere but in India is the all absorbing influence which religion and philosophy may exercise on the human mind. So far as we can judge, a large clan of people in India, not only the priestly class, but the nobility also, not only men, but women also, never looked upon their life on earth as something real. What was real to them was the invisible, the life to come. What formed the theme of their conversations, what formed the subject of their meditations, was the real that alone lent some kind of reality to this unreal phenomenal world. Whoever was supposed to have caught a new ray of truth was visited by young and old, was honoured by Princes and Kings, nay, was looked upon as holding a position far above that of Kings and Princes. That is the side of the life of ancient India which deserves our study, because there has been nothing like it in the whole world, not even in Greece or in Palestine. . . Was it so very unnatural in them, endowed as they were with a transcendent intellect, to look upon this life, not as an arena for gladiatorial strife, or as a market for cheating and huckstering, but as a resting place, a mere waiting room at a station on a journey from the known to the unknown, but exciting for that very reason their utmost curiosity as to whence they came and whither they were going?"

This feeling of the deep human importance of Oriental studies, which almost turns the professorial chair into a pulpit of religious

propaganda, is as strikingly manifested in a recent letter from M. Leon De Rosny, the greatest of French Orientalists, who is chiefly concerned with the religion of Buddha. M. De Rosny writes:

"For the last few years, the critical spirit of Europe has been studying the Buddhist philosophy, and I have founded a large school, which comprises disciples in many lands, who have undertaken the mission of establishing on a solid basis the science of destiny, or in other terms, the science that M. Berthelot calls the Ideal Science. I have a powerful enemy to struggle against, one that I will struggle against to the last day of my life, namely the indifferentism of those that wilfully ignore the possibility of Science, and that are considered by Buddhism as criminal as the assassin. Science and Love are the essential factors of Buddhism, but must not be considered as one and the same thing. The legend of the Bodhisattva, which represents the early Buddhism, furnished a most touching example. The Buddha, before arriving at the summit of knowledge, was the son of a King, brought up in the lap of luxury. The suffering of humanity caused the band which covered his eyes to be withdrawn, and he saw the needs of his fellow men. He abandons his venerable father, his beautiful wife, leaves his palace, dresses himself in the rags of a beggar, and begins his work. After having imposed on himself the modification of the flesh, he obtained the knowledge of the ineffable law, which saves mankind and opens the doors of Nirvan."

THE FAIRY GIFT.

There was once a maiden who came into this earth world upon an adverse day. The planetary rays warred one with another; winter lay thick upon the land; it rained; winds blew; the sun could not shine. Not a fairy attended the birth. The small maid lay and wailed in her cradle while preparations were made for the christening. Consternation fluttered the attendants. King-Father was cross. Only Queen-Mother asked for the wee wailing maiden to be put upon her arm, and then she lay quite still and hoped.

Just as the christening hour struck, and while all listened for the sound of fairy wheels which came not, a low rustle was heard in the outer hall, as if one dry leaf rubbed against another and sighed.

"That is no christening sound," said King-Father, and he swore his Great Oath.

"Unbar the door," said Queen Mother; "all sounds are God's sounds and the least that is his is fit for christening day."

The wise men, consulted by King-Father's nod, said: "Great is the wisdom of the wise, but Mother-Love is very holy. Let the door be unbarred by the hand of a Mother, Oh King." The Mother-Queen herself unbarred the door, which was called "The Gate of Destiny," and as she slid the bolts, in her heart she breathed this prayer:

"Come weal, come woe to crown my child, all is welcome which comes from God. Whate'er betide, may her heart be pure, her life clean, and her spiritual insight unveiled."

And the bolts slid back to a chord of music.

Then a half drowned fairy entered the hall, her robes of dulled purple, wet and dripping, her golden mantle sodden and browned. Out of clinging garments and dripping, unfeathered wings her small pale face shone with the white light of stars.

"I am the fairy who lives at the root of the heartease," said she. "It is the wild heartease which rambles through the garden. A weed, the court gardeners called it; but Mother-Queen forbade it to be destroyed; she ordered that its roots be ever uplifted from stony places and preserved and watered wherever they would live. Hence, when all other fairies have foregone this christening and not

a gift is here for storm and wind and loud weather, here am I with my small gift."

Then the King and the Queen looked at one another. A smile slipped under his eyebrows and her hand stole into his waiting hand. For only the King knew that the Queen cared for the wild heartease because it was *his* childhood's flower, because he always loved it and saw her girlhood's face, the face of his dear and ever young love in the bright face of the wild heartease.

"You brought love and ease to my wild heart," he was used to whisper, "when first you stole into it to dwell there always."

Seeing that the King's face softened as he bent towards her, and that Mother-Queen smiled amid the listening attendants, the fairy went towards the child. Bending over it, she uttered this wish and gave this gift:

"One thing only have I to give thee, one thing alone of my own. Through storm and shine, in the absence of every gift of fortune, this flower be thine. Whatever thou lookest upon, whatever thing thou shalt touch; what thou meetest by the way or passes by, that thing shall *shine*. Yea: the bitterest sorrow, be it even the blackest hour, in thy presence it shall shine, if thine eye be turned upon it. That gift I give thee."

Then King-Father uprose on his throne and nodded a third great nod. It caused the palace to be filled with great lights, with dancing and music.

"It is well done," said he, "and may the God of my fathers bless the heartease fairy."

At this the fairy shone like the sun, for she had obtained that which the whole fairy world longs for and only sees once in centuries—a mortal blessing in the name of the God of Humanity. And the christening was a happy one.

When the little maiden grew up, her human lot was crossed by many disasters. But the face of the deepest sorrow brightened as she looked steadfastly upon it. The dark hours smiled despite themselves as she moved among them. All that she looked upon was touched as if by some inner radiance. When she shone, all things shone after her. She had the gift of wild heartease.

THE ONE RELIGION.

II.

The special subject which I propose for this paper is:

Is there an essential unity in Religious systems, and if so, what is the simplest term which will express it?

Before considering the analyses and comparisons which should lead us to an answer to this question, I wish to direct your attention to a salient fact of almost all religious history, most difficult of explanation, but which our theory of religions must explain if it is to stand, and which we may therefore bear in mind as a sort of touchstone of the validity of our conclusions. I mean the fact of voluntary martyrdom for religious convictions. What is the significance of martyrdoms—what has sustained these great numbers of human beings in going, usually of their free will and with joyous bearing, to so terrible and ignominious a death? The answer to these questions must lie very near to the heart of the subject which we are investigating.

We speak of religious enthusiasm and fanaticism; but these are mere names, explaining nothing. Have any facts come within our own experience in every day life which will explain this phenomenon? Is there, do you think, any considerable section of the American public at the present time who can by any stretch of imagination be seriously thought of as singing and dancing on the road to martyrdom for *religious conviction?*

I think that you will agree with me that there is not.

And if this intensity of religious life is not to be found in America, then certainly not in the Western world; for there is little doubt, I think, but that America possesses more real religion to-day than any other Western land—which, unhappily, however, is not necessarily saying very much.

Yet it is only a few months since you read in your journals the astounding news of how a hundred Persians had been cruelly massacred for their faith, and we know if we have inquired that during the past sixty years at least ten thousand human beings—some say thirty thousand—have perished in that country in the same way; and we read that they have gone to their death with joyous faces, with song and dance. Prof. Browne of Cambridge, in his deeply

interesting and scholarly works on the subject of the religion of the Babis, tells us of Sulayman Khan who, his body "pierced with deep wounds, in each of which burned a lighted wick, hastened, as a bridegroom to his bride, to the place of execution, singing with exultation:

" 'Grasping in one hand the wine cup, clinging to my Darling's hair,
Gaily dancing, thus would I confront the scaffold in the square.' "

And he tells us of Mirza Kurban Ali whom, when brought to the foot of the execution pole, the headsman smote with a sword from behind. The blow only wounded the old man's neck and cast his turban upon the ground. He raised his head and exclaimed:

"O happy that intoxicated lover who, at the feet of his Beloved, knoweth not whether it be his head or his turban which he casteth."

And he and Gobineau tells us that these were no exceptional cases—that this was the spirit in which these martyrs usually went to execution. So enamored are they of the coveted cup of martyrdom, so devoted are they to their brothers in the faith, that it has more than once happened, it is said, that a believer arrested by mistake for another has gone to his death without a murmur, though a protest would have procured his release.

Now I submit to you, that martyrdom of this sort—fully paralleled too, no doubt, in the history of Christianity and other faiths,—however familiar we may be with it as matter of history and so callous to its significance,—is in reality a very wonderful thing, little short of a miracle, considering men and women and religious faith as a factor controlling action as we know them in our every-day life. It is the most prominent and striking external fact connected with religions. If we are not able to explain it, our theories will go for naught; but if we do solve its meaning we may be sure that we have gone far towards penetrating the mystery of religions.

Returning now to our immediate subject, let us see what answer to our question is indicated by analysis and comparison of religious systems.

The searching examination of the religions of the world which has been going on now for many years has revealed in all of them one, and in most of them two, points of identity. We notice, first, that however far religions may be apart in that which relates to such matters as cosmogony, philosophy, or psychology, there is no sub-

stantial difference between them in the broad features of their ethical codes. The great virtues, probity, truthfulness, filialty, respect for the life and rights of others and the like, are commanded or encouraged by them all. This agreement on broad lines was of course to be expected if religions have, as they assert, a Divine origin; but on the other hand, the divergencies which we find in other matters need not cause our confidence to be impaired. For these divergencies will be found, as the study of the subject proceeds, to be more apparent than real. Moreover, the special matter—in fact, so far as concerns the masses of mankind, the only matter—with which religions must necessarily deal, is the conduct of life; and it is also the simplest subject which religious leaders have occasion to consider, most others having great complexity and difficulty of exposition. This is therefore the field in which, on account of its importance, the true doctrine is most likely to be expounded in full, and on account of its simplicity is least likely to be misunderstood.

The second feature to which I have referred as common to most religions, is that they inculcate and seemed based upon Love as at once the highest duty of man and the profoundest element of human and Divine character.

The Great Upanishads, probably the most ancient as well as the grandest of sacred books known to us, tell us of the oneness of all beings, teach us to look in them for ourselves and for God, teach us, that is, that the first and the last guide-post for the aspiring soul is to the path of kindness, compassion and love for all that lives.

The Bhagavad Gita, the lineal descendant of the Great Upanishads, handing down their lessons in sublime celestial song, pulsating with the life and warmth and vigor of the Good Law, which has perhaps been venerated by more millions of human beings than any other sacred work, begins and culminates in the declaration—"He who sees Me in all beings and all beings in Me, who, firm in the perception of the oneness of all, loves me dwelling in all beings, he who sees the same life in all things as in himself, he it is, O Arjuna, who seeks Me by the highest path."

The follower of Zoroaster begins each day with a supplication

that he may be kept pure in thought, word and deed, and think of his neighbor as himself.

And hear the Buddha, that mighty man, the most majestic figure of ancient days, who trod the plains of India for nigh to half a century uttering words of Peace and Love:

"And he (the follower of the Path) lets his mind pervade one quarter of the globe with thoughts of love, and so the second, and so the third, and so the fourth. And thus the whole wide world, above, below, around and everywhere, does he continue to pervade with thoughts of love, far reaching, grown great and beyond measure.

"Just, Vasetha, as a mighty trumpeter makes himself heard, and that without difficulty, towards all the four directions; even so, of all things that have shape or form, there is not one that he passes by or leaves aside, but regards them all with heart set free and deep-felt love." [1]

And here are two of the meditations which he prescribed:

"The first meditation is the meditation of love, in which you must so adjust your heart that you long for the weal and welfare of all beings, including the happiness of your enemies.

"The second meditation is the meditation of pity, in which you think of all beings in distress, vividly representing in your imagination their sorrows and anxieties, so as to arouse a deep compassion for them in your soul." [2]

The great Christian Master declared:

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength, this is the first commandment.

"And the second is like, namely thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

"There is none other commandment greater than these."

Paul said:

"The greatest of these is love."

Peter said:

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[1].—Translation of Prof. Rhys Davids.

[2].—Rhys Davids "Buddhism."

"Above all have fervent love among yourselves."

John said:

"God is love."

Said Baha Ullah:

"The most glorious attainment is the understanding of this great saying: 'All beings are the fruits of one tree, the leaves of one branch, the drops of one sea. Honor is for him who loveth men, not for him who loveth his own."

"O Son of Man!

"Because thy creation rejoiced Me, therefore I created thee. Love me, that I may acknowledge thee and in the Spirit of Life confirm thee.

"O Son of Existence!

"Love Me, that thou mayest know My love for thee. If thou lovest Me not, My love can never reach thee.

"Know this, O servant.

"O Son of Existence!

"Thy rose garden is My Love, thy paradise is My Nearness. Therefore enter in and tarry not.

"In My Supreme Majesty, in My Highest Kingdom, it is this which has been ordained for thee.

"O Son of Existence!

"My love is My Kingdom. Whosoever enters it is safe; whosoever seeks it not is led astray and perishes.

"O Son of Spirit!

"Lay not upon any man what thou wouldst not have placed against thyself.

"O Children of men!

"Know ye why I created ye from one dust? That no one should glorify himself over the other, that ye shall always bear in mind the manner of your creation. Since I have created ye of one substance, it behooves ye to be as one, walking with common feet, eating with one mouth, living in one land; until in your natures and your deeds the signs of the Unity and the essence of the Oneness shall appear."

"The essence of the nature of God is love," says Abbas Effendi; and he has also said:

"Have thou full assurance that love is the mystery of the appearance of God; that love is the Divine aspect of God; that Love is spiritual grace; that love is the light of the Kingdom; that love is the breath of the Holy Spirit in the spirit of men. Love is the cause of the manifestation of truth in the material world.

"Love is the highest law in this great universe of God. Love is the law of order betwixt simple essences, whereby they are apportioned and united into compound substances in this world of matter. Love is the essential and magnetic power that organizes the planets and the stars which shine in infinite space. Love supplies the impulse to that intense and unceasing meditation which reveals the hidden mysteries of the universe.

"Love is the highest honour for all the nations of men. To that people in whom God causes love to appear the Supreme Concourse, the angels of heaven and the hosts of the Kingdom of the Glorious One make salutation.

"O friends of God! be ye manifestations of the love of God and lamps of guidance in all the horizons, shining by the light of love and harmony.

"How beautiful is the shining of this shining!" [1]

And the words of our own Emerson are well worthy to stand with those of the other great Masters:

"Love reduces all inequalities as the sun melts the iceberg in the sea. The heart and soul of all men being one, this bitterness of 'I' and 'Mine' ceases. His is mine. I am my brother and my brother is me. If I feel over-shadowed and outdone by great neighbors, I can yet love; I can still receive, and he that loveth maketh his own the grandeur that he loves."

Nor will I pass on without quoting the literature of Theosophy, a movement much misunderstood and misrepresented, but to which we of the West owe a great debt, since it has made known to us, more than any other movement of the last century, with the possible exception of Bahâism, the real nature of religion, and the underlying unity of all religions. I read from H. P. Blavatsky's "Voice of the Silence."

1.—Life and Teachings of Abbas Effendi. Phelps, pp. 235 et seq. Putnâms, New York and London.

"Armed with the key of Charity, of Love and tender Mercy, thou art secure before the gate which standeth at the entrance to the Path.

"Sow kindly acts, and thou shalt reap their fruition. Inaction in a deed of mercy becomes an action in a deadly sin.

"Let thy soul lend its ear to every cry of pain like as the lotus bares its heart to drink the morning sun. Let not the fierce sun dry one tear of pain before thou thyself hast wiped it from the sufferer's eye. Let each burning human tear drop on thy heart and there remain, nor ever brush it off until the pain that caused it is removed."

These two features of identity in religion—Law and Love—are very closely united with each other. If you love, you do not need the law. Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity and other religions tell us to treat our neighbors thus and thus. But if we love our neighbors, we will not need to be told this. Henry Drummond has put it strongly as follows: "If a man love his fellow men, you will never require to tell him to honor his father and mother. He will do that without thinking about it. It would be preposterous to tell him not to kill. He would never dream of it. It would be absurd to tell him not to steal. He would never steal from those he loved. He would rather they possessed the goods than that he should possess them. It would be absurd to tell him not to bear false witness against his neighbor. If he loved him it would be the last thing he would do. And you would never have to tell him not to covet what his neighbor had. He would be rejoicing in his neighbor's possessions. So you will see that as Paul truly said, 'Love is the fulfilling of the law.'" And Mr. Drummond is very right in calling love the *"the greatest thing in the world."*

This indicates very clearly the *purpose for which law was enacted.* Evidently it is the Lord's *instrument for the development of love.* Act, says the law, *as you would* if you loved your neighbor. Thus it becomes habitual in you so to act and that trait of character is developed in you.

But, it may be urged, this insistance upon love does not seem to be universal in all religions. This is perhaps true; e. g., ancient Judaism does not, so far as I am aware, possess that element. If

this be true—I do not assert that it is so—it only means that those religions which do not speak of love are concerned with the training of men who have not yet reached the point at which love is developed in them. They are still wholly under the law. Their relation to God is that of servant to master. Later in their development will come the stage where the relation is that of son to father, and later still that where love is perfectly developed, and the relation that of fellowship.

The three stages are well illustrated in the case of Judaism and Christianity. The Mosaic code seems to deal exclusively with law and punishment for its violation. The Prophets introduced a doctrine much less harsh, referring to God as a loving father, who desired mercy and not sacrifice; and later Christ Jesus taught the fatherhood of God.

The third stage, that of fellowship with God, that wherein neighborly love has expanded into Infinit Love—not love which considers others *as* self, but love which *only* considers others, ignoring self—was attained by Christ himself and some of his disciples.

Law, therefore, the ethical and moral codes common to all religions, is only a means for attaining love, for developing in men the capacity to love.

Ultimately, then, it seems that religion is nothing more nor less than the practice of love, and that if perfect love be attained, all will be attained.

Are there any flaws in this argument? It would seem not. That which is common to all religions, Law, tends to produce the capacity to love and is superfluous in the presence of Love. Clearly Love is the essence of religion.

This is the way the matter looks theoretically. But will the theory explain all the facts: will it, for instance, account for the fact of martyrdoms, by which we proposed to test our conclusions?

Speaking as an exponent of American thought, American views, American beliefs, I must say that it will not. I have seen nothing, known nothing, experienced nothing in American life which would influence me to believe that religion can develop a love which would lead men in large numbers to the giving up of life.

And so the things which I have been saying about love as the vital part of religion, while familiar to me as words for years, long

remained mere words without convincing power, without presenting themselves to me as living realities able to take hold of my life and shape it. But within a comparatively short time they have acquired a meaning for me which they did not have before. It may interest you and perhaps instruct you if I tell you how that came about.

It was first in the summer of 1902 that my attention was drawn to the religion of Bahâism. I studied its history carefully, reading of the amazing spectacle (amazing certainly for this age) to which I have referred, of thousands going joyously to martyrdom. I became so interested in the subject that in the fall of that year I went to Akka. There I saw that wonderful man who calls himself the servant of the servants of God, living a life of pure unselfishness, loving all and beloved by all, hardly less by his fellow-citizens of other faiths than by those of the faith which he leads, inculcating the highest moral and ethical doctrines, leading his people with high purpose and strong hand, and first and last and above all fostering the love of God and man in their hearts.

I saw there another, a most remarkable thing; that this man had *the power of awakening love,* not merely for himself—indeed, no one can know him and not love him,—but for *God and men* in those about him; so that the band of some ninety believers who live in Akka are like a single family, showing in their faces, their speech, their deeds, hearts full of love to God, to their Master and to their fellowmen.

Professor Browne, who visited Akka in 1889, received a somewhat similar impression. He says, in describing the visit: "The spirit which pervades the Babis is such that it can hardly fail to affect most powerfully all subjected to its influence. Let those who have not seen disbelieve me if they will, but should that spirit once reveal itself to them, they will experience an emotion they are not likely to forget."[1] As I have said elsewhere, nothing could be more true. In the presence of a number of them, aglow, as they all are, with the fire of love, conviction and determination, one feels, however he may believe, that scepticism about the reality of spiritual

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1.—A Traveller's Narrative, p. xxxix.

existence is a trifle absurd, and that things unseen must be at least as certain as things seen.

While seeing all this in the fall of 1902, I yet did not at that time grasp its full significance. I am satisfied that this was due to my inability to speak to Abbas Effendi directly, in any common language.

Then I went to India. A kind Providence led me at once to another, an Indian, Sage, of profound spiritual insight. He also was a fervent lover of the Lord, and he also was one who had the power of communicating the fire of love which pervaded his being to those about him. With him I studied for a year. Many, many things he taught me; but chiefly and always of the kindness, the tenderness, the watchfulness, the beneficence, the personal and direct care, of the Lord; that it is our duty and our highest privilege to draw near to Him, to love Him, and finally to attain to Him, to know Him.

The God both of the Master of Akka and of the Sages of India is one whose love is selfless and limitless, but also penetrating and searching; so irresistible in its power that it holds all things living in its tender embrace and adjusts every condition of their existence according to their highest needs; to whose estimation nothing is great and nothing small; who displays the same infinite care for the blade of grass, the microscopic insect and the highly evolved and intellectual human being; upon whose Infinite Love every atom, every tiny infusoria, rests in that absolute security which only Infinite Tenderness and Infinite Power can insure; who, infinitely watchful and infinitely solicitous, provides for every existing thing the conditions for its most rapid advancement and leads it with entire certainty and safety to the highest fruition of its nature, and ultimately to its assured heritage of absolute knowledge and bliss; who never afflicts His children except as affliction is *necessary to lead them higher,* and as soon as they are able, shows them the way to union with Himself; and who, therefore, merits all the gratitude, devotion and love which the heart of man can conceive. And they tell us that if by due meditation upon His Universe and His Law, we convince ourselves of the indubitable fact that such a God as this is indeed our Gracious Lord, we may hope to feel that love for Him spring up in our hearts which has furnished in all ages the most powerful mainspring to human action.

By the aid of my Indian Teacher, I also came to penetrate below the surface of Indian life and to see that the spirit which really dominates it is that of devotion, of love, of assiduous service to the Lord. Visit one of the great temples on a festival, like that, for instance, of Rameshvaram on the festival of Shivarâtri, the night of Shiva; see the throngs of eager worshipers gathered from the length and breadth of India pressing upon each other in this vast temple; the earnest crowds lining the streets and dragging in triumphant progress the effigies of the World-Powers, enthroned in state on enormous cars and garlanded with flowers; the bands of yellow-robed Sanyasins rushing singing through the streets and majestic temple corridors to prostrate themselves before these altars; the troops of pilgrims bringing the water of the Ganges a thousand miles to lave these shrines,—and whatever you may think of the way in which it is expressed, you cannot doubt the fervour, the intensity of the devotion.

These two experiences—what I have seen and learned in Akka and in India—have unlocked for me the secret of religions; have convinced me, have more than intellectually convinced me, have rather caused me to realize as a fact that I have witnessed, that Love of God and of man is the true and ultimate basis of all religion. Under its influence, when it flows forth from God or God-like men, human nature becomes transformed, as iron under the influence of heat. "Human nature," says Abbas Effendi, "is like iron, of which the characteristics in its normal state are to be black, cold and solid. The grace of the Holy Spirit (love) is like fire which glows upon the iron and changes its blackness to redness, its coldness to heat, its solidity to fluidity. The iron has received the rays of the fire; its characteristics have been changed by the heat of the fire. In the same way, the spirit of man, when it shall receive the rays of the Holy Spirit, will become endowed with the attributes of the Holy Spirit." (Life and Teachings of Abbas Effendi, p. 180).

This is indeed the power which has made possible the martyrdoms of the Bahâis. This is the "wine," whose "intoxication" they court, and of which they sing as they go gaily to death.

"When, says Abbas Effendi, he (the Believer) has reached this stage he receives assurances and confirmations, he attains stead-'

fastness and constancy. His faith becomes unalterable, firmly established as a mountain. If the seas of superstition roll their waves over him, they move him no more than would a drop of water. If all tests and temptations assault him in unison, they have no influence upon him. He is so sure, so firm, so joyful, so steeped in faith, so intent upon the kingdom of God, so strong in his spiritual life, that he sings and dances under the sword of the foe. Though all the men of the world were gathered together, wishing to move him from his faith, they could not. Why? Because he receives light from the Source of All Gifts." (Ib. p. 187).

It is this which makes Bahâism a great power, a youthful giant, among religions. It is this which accounts for the extraordinary success of its missionaries, both in Mohamedan and Western lands, a success which has caused amazement to many a Christian minister and missionary board.

This, likewise, explains the great vitality and strength displayed by Christianity in the earlier centuries of this era. It is equally the power of the one, the only, the universal Divine Love which has sustained the Christian and the Bahâi martyrs, and which supplies the living, vital, consuming spiritual fire, which he, who knows how to seek, may find anywhere among the two hundred and fifty millions of the people of the *Jnana Bhumi*—the land of spiritual knowledge—the India of to-day—very much the same, I fancy, as the India of three, or even five, thousand years ago.

We have thus resolved the most important part of practical religion into the practice of love; and have also seen reason to believe that the spiritual power which leads to the practice of love comes to man, or at least requires a stimulus, as of a teacher or leader, from without him, that is, without his ordinary everyday nature. We are thus confronted with the profoundly interesting questions: What is the cause of the migrations of spiritual force? Why is it most powerfully manifested, now in Christianity, now in Mohammedanism, now in Bahâism? How is it that Hinduism, the most ancient of the religions of the earth, has not, like some other old religions, lost its power, that it still retains all the fire and energy of its prime?

In the next paper we shall consider whether an answer to these questions can be found.

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